

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEGUCI 04483 181907Z

41

ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INR-05 INRE-00

CIAE-00 SP-02 PRS-01 L-01 IO-03 PM-03 DODE-00 EB-03

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O R 181814Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8378

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO

S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 4483

LIMDIS

AMEMBASSY PANAMA PASS TO AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ, QUARTERS 16,
ALBROOK AFB, CANAL ZONE
GUATEMALA PASS ROCAP
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, ES, HO

SUBJECT: GOH CABINET CRISIS AND CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT RUMORS

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 4449 AND 4468

1. POLOFF RECEIVING REPORTS OF CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN NEAR
FUTURE. SUCH REPORTS ARE UNCONFIRMED AND ARE OFTEN CONFLICTING.

2. WHILE THERE ARE MANY SCENARIOS DESCRIBED BY VARIOUS
INDIVIDUALS, ONE OF THE MAIN THREADS OF CONJECTURE CENTERS
ABOUT A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT WITHOUT VIOLENCE. THAT IS TO
SAY CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ WOULD ACCEPT THE NAMING OF A

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SECRET

PAGE 02 TEGUCI 04483 181907Z

TRIUMVIRATE WHICH WOULD CONSIST OF TWO PROMINENT CIVILIANS

AND A MILITARY LEADER SUCH AS MINGOV MELGAR OR COLONEL MIGUEL ANGEL GARCIA. A LARGE NUMBER OF CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN FLOATED AS THE PROSPECTIVE CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF THE TRIUMVIRATE.

3. POLOFF HAD MEETING WITH CARLOS ROBERTO REINA ON MORNING OF OCTOBER 18, HE IS LEADER OF THE "DEMOCRATIC LEFT" ELEMENT OF THE LIBERAL PARTY. REINA STATED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED A REQUEST LAST WEEK FOR HIS OPINION ON THE PROPOSED MEDIATION PLAN FOR TREATING THE HONDURAN/SALVADORAN DISPUTE. HE SAID THAT HE HAD SENT A REPLY INDICATING HIS APPROVAL OF THE PLAN. REINA CONFIRMED WHAT MINLAB FONSECA TOLD POLOFFS ON OCTOBER 17 (SEE TEGUCIGALPA 4449) THAT CABINET CRISIS IGNITED DURING CABINET MEETING ON OCTOBER 11. HE UNDERSTANDS THAT MINFIN ACOSTA BONILLA ATTACKED FONMIN BATRES' MEDIATION PLAN BY SUPPORTING ARBITRATION RATHER THAN MEDIATION. BATRES THEN PRESENTED HIS RESIGNATION AFTER MAJORITY OF CABINET AND CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ SIDED WITH ACOSTA.

4. REINA SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN HEARING ALL KINDS OF RUMORS RANGING FROM VARIOUS KINDS OF COUPS TO A COMPLETE CABINET CHANGE TO A PARTIAL RENOVATION OF THE CABINET. HE COMMENTED THAT THIS HIS VIEWPOINT THE COUNTRY IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY POLORIZED BETWEEN THE FORCES DESIRING CHANGE AND THOSE COMMITTED TO THE STATUS QUO. HE SAID HE HOPED THAT LOPEZ WOULD BE WISE ENOUGH TO INTEGRATE POLITICIANS INTO HIS CABINET AND TO AT LEAST GIVE SOME INDICATION THAT THERE WOULD BE FUTURE ELECTIONS. REINA EMPHASIZED THAT A RIGHT WING MILITARY COUP COULD DO NOTHING BUT INTENSIFY AND EXACERBATE THE PRESENT PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE COUNTRY.

5. POLOFF ALSO SPOKE TO MARIO RIVERA LOPEZ, A PROMINENT NATIONALIST, ON MORNING OF OCTOBER 18. RIVERA EMPHASIZED THAT HONDURAS IS CONFRONTING ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL PERIODS IN ITS HISTORY. HE LAMENTED THE FACT THAT BATRES FELT COMPELLED TO RESIGN WHEN ACOSTA AND A MAJORITY OF THE CABINET OPPOSED THE MEDIATION PLAN FOR SETTLING THE HONDURAN/SALVADORAN DISPUTE. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE CABINET DECISION GREW OUT OF THE FACT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS FUNDAMENTALLY WEAK AND IS UNSURE OF ITS GOALS. HE SAID THAT IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR LOPEZ TO TAKE

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PAGE 03 TEGUCI 04483 181907Z

A FIRM HAND AND MAKE HARD DECISIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OR THE SITUATION OF HONDURAS WOULD GO FROM BAD TO WORSE.

6. COMMENT: HONDURAS IS PRESENTLY FACING A TRIPLE CRISIS. THE FIRST IS THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRISIS LEFT IN THE WAKE OF HURRICANE FIFI. THE SECOND IS THE CABINET CRISIS CAUSED BY THE INTERNAL CABINET DISAGREEMENT ON THE MEDIATION FORMULA WITH EL SALVADOR. THE THIRD CRISIS CONCERNS FUTURE RELATIONS

WITH EL SALVADOR.

7. ANY ONE OF THE CRISES WOULD BE HARD TO RESOLVE GIVEN HONDURAS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AND GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE. HOWEVER, ALL TAKEN TOGETHER SIGNAL A PERIOD OF EXTREME DIFFICULTY FOR THE GOVERNMENT. AS FAR AS NEGOTIATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR ARE CONCERNED THIS PROBABLY SIGNALS A "FREEZING" OF THE PRESENT SITUATION FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD.

8. THE MOUNTING FLOOD OF COUP STORIES IS UNDOUBTEDLY HAVING A PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON THE POWER SECTORS WITHIN THE SOCIETY. WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BRING ABOUT MORE INTENSE PLOTTING TO UNDERMINE THE PRESENT REGIME. A BASIC POINT IS HOW LONG LOPEZ WAITS TO RESOLVE THE PRESENT CABINET CRISIS. LOPEZ WILL FIND HIMSELF CONFRONTED WITH INCREASINGLY COMPLICATED ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS IF HE DOES NOT TAKE ACTION WITHIN THE RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE TO REINTEGRATE THE CABINET AND ESTABLISH A CLEAR SET OF GOVERNMENT GOALS FOR THE FUTURE.
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